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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
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10/680,968

10/07/2003

Georgia L. Zehner

18,493

6068

23556

7590

05/31/2005

KIMBERLY-CLARK WORLDWIDE, INC.
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EXAMINER

COLE, ELIZABETH M

ART UNIT

PAPER NUMBER

1771

DATE MAILED: 05/31/2005

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/680,968

Applicant(s)

ZEHNER ET AL

Examiner

Elizabeth M. Cole

Art Unit

1771

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --
Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☐ Responsive to communication(s) filed on ____.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-31 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) ____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) ____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-31 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) ____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) ____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on ____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. ____.
 - ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. ____ |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152) |
| 3) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date <u>1/12/05: 2/23/04/2/11/04</u> | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: ____ |

Art Unit: 1771

1. Claims 1-31 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph, as failing to comply with the enablement requirement. The claim(s) contains subject matter which was not described in the specification in such a way as to enable one skilled in the art to which it pertains, or with which it is most nearly connected, to make and/or use the invention. The specification as originally filed does not enable one skilled in the art to make the claimed invention because it does not disclose what is meant by activation, or how activation is achieved.

2. Claims 1-31 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. In independent claims 1 and 18, it is not clear what is meant by "activation". How is the liner material activated? Also, it is not clear what is meant by "adapted to", in that the structural or other changes which adapt the liner are not set forth in the claim. Also, in claims 1 and 18, it is not clear what is meant by the limitation that the elastic is non-tensioned. Does this mean that the elastic is associated with the fluid permeable layer while it is in a non-tensioned state or does it mean that the elastic is never under tension, or does it refer to the state of the elastic before "activation"? Also in claims 1 and 18, it is not clear what the claimed extensibility is in reaction to, i.e., what force is applied to extend the liner composite at least 25%? In claims 2 and 21, it is not clear what is meant by the limitation "the three-dimensional configuration is a barrier element". Does this mean that the configuration comprises a barrier element or that it forms a barrier element, and if it means it forms a barrier element, where is the barrier element in relation to the other portions of the absorbent

Art Unit: 1771

article. In claims 4, and 13 it is not clear what is meant by “associated with and superposed on... to thereby form a periphery”. Does this mean that the size of the liner composite is the same as the size of the outer cover? In claim 6, , it is noted that neither claim 1 nor claim 5 recite a leg structure, so it is not clear where the leg portion of the absorbent article is in relation to the rest of the absorbent article. In claims 7 and 24, 26, it is not clear how the barrier element can be liquid impermeable since the barrier element is formed from the three-dimensional liner composite which is described as being fluid permeable. In claim 8, it is not clear what the barrier element is laterally oriented with regard to, in other words, what is the reference point which the barrier element is lateral to? In claim 9, it is not clear where the waist elastic is in relation to the claimed absorbent article. In claim 19, it is not clear how the barrier element can be liquid impermeable since it is formed by the liner composite which is taught as being permeable in claim 1. In claims 11 and 27, it is not clear what the structure of a fit element is. How does claim 11 further limit the independent claim? The structure of the fit element is not set forth, and the structure of the absorbent article comprising the fit element is not set forth. Claims 2-17, 19-31 rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being incomplete for omitting essential elements, such omission amounting to a gap between the elements. See MPEP § 2172.01. The omitted elements are: how the barrier element, leg elastic, leg, waist, waist band and fit elements are disposed in the structure of the absorbent article. The independent claims recite an impervious layer, (called the outer cover), the absorbent core and the permeable liner. The dependent claims state various elements , (i.e., barrier, leg cuff,

Art Unit: 1771

waist band, fit element), that the liner composite "is", but do not set forth the actual structure of the absorbent article.

3. The nonstatutory double patenting rejection is based on a judicially created doctrine grounded in public policy (a policy reflected in the statute) so as to prevent the unjustified or improper timewise extension of the "right to exclude" granted by a patent and to prevent possible harassment by multiple assignees. See *In re Goodman*, 11 F.3d 1046, 29 USPQ2d 2010 (Fed. Cir. 1993); *In re Longi*, 759 F.2d 887, 225 USPQ 645 (Fed. Cir. 1985); *In re Van Ornum*, 686 F.2d 937, 214 USPQ 761 (CCPA 1982); *In re Vogel*, 422 F.2d 438, 164 USPQ 619 (CCPA 1970); and, *In re Thorington*, 418 F.2d 528, 163 USPQ 644 (CCPA 1969).

A timely filed terminal disclaimer in compliance with 37 CFR 1.321(c) may be used to overcome an actual or provisional rejection based on a nonstatutory double patenting ground provided the conflicting application or patent is shown to be commonly owned with this application. See 37 CFR 1.130(b).

Effective January 1, 1994, a registered attorney or agent of record may sign a terminal disclaimer. A terminal disclaimer signed by the assignee must fully comply with 37 CFR 3.73(b).

4. Claims 1-32 are provisionally rejected under the judicially created doctrine of obviousness-type double patenting as being unpatentable over claims 1-23 of copending Application No. 10/680.967. Although the conflicting claims are not identical, they are not patentably distinct from each other because each discloses a disposable absorbent article comprising a cover, a core and an elastic material-containing layer which retracts to form a three-dimensional configuration.

This is a provisional obviousness-type double patenting rejection because the conflicting claims have not in fact been patented.

5. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the

Art Unit: 1771

invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

6. Claims 1-32 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Coles, EP 650,714, alone or in the alternative, in view of Osborn III et al, U.S. Patent No. 6,287,288. Coles discloses an absorbent article which comprises a topsheet a back sheet and an absorbent core. The topsheet is permeable. The absorbent article has an elastic composite which can be attached to either the topsheet or the backsheet. The elastic composite is formed by attaching the elastic in a relaxed state, (which is equated to the claimed non-tensioned state) to another layer. See abstract. The elastic composite is then activated by stretching it to extend the other layer and activate the elastic layer. See col., 4, lines 14-26. The activated elastic composite then gathers the portions of the absorbent article to which it is attached, which corresponds to the claimed formation of the three dimensional configuration. See col. 4, lines 35-55. The elastic composite can be attached to leg portions, barrier cuffs or waist bands of the absorbent article. See col. 6, lines 9-24. While Coles does not disclose the retraction capability, since Coles teaches forming an elastic composite which can be applied to various regions of the absorbent article where elasticity is desired, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to have selected the particular degree of elasticity and thus retraction capability desired in the finished article. With regard to the limitation that the other layer to which the elastic layer is bonded is extensible, it is noted the Coles discloses that the layer is generally inextensible and defines this as being able to extend 5% at a force of between 0.5 and 5 N/cm. The examiner is not able to determine whether this would anticipate the claimed

Art Unit: 1771

degree of extensibility since the force applied is not set forth in the instant claims.

Therefore, in the alternative, if the second layer of Coles is considered to be inextensible, Osborn teaches employing an extensible material as either the topsheet, the backsheet or both. See col. 14, lines 57-67. The extensible topsheet and/or backsheet enhances the comfort of the wearer of the absorbent article. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to have employed an extensible topsheet or backsheet in the absorbent article of Coles, motivated by the expectation that this would enhance the comfort of the wearer of the absorbent article. The extensible topsheet would correspond to the claimed extensible, permeable liner material which is associated with the elastic material since the elastic composite of Coles can be bonded to regions to the topsheet of the absorbent article.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Elizabeth M. Cole whose telephone number is (571) 272-1475. The examiner may be reached between 6:30 AM and 6:00 PM Monday through Wednesday, and 6:30 AM and 2 PM on Thursday.

Mr. Terrel Morris, the examiner's supervisor, may be reached at (571) 272-1478.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

The fax number for all official faxes is (703) 872-9306.



Elizabeth M. Cole

ELIZABETH M. COLE
PRIMARY EXAMINER